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find it. There are many cases like that. My friends in the age-village will go to a diviner who will declare that the shades are angry because I do not care for my father.' If a daughter makes a runaway marriage her father is angry and it is believed that either she may not conceive or her baby may be ailing until the marriage-cattle and bull of puberty have been given by her husband and accepted by her father.

The respect and obedience due to a father is due to his heir, and in certain circumstances to his sister also; while on his part the heir has the same obligations to his juniors as the deceased had. Fibombe cited the example, already quoted, of a man quarrelling with his dead father's sister over the distribution of the marriage-cattle for his own sister, and the girl failing to conceive because of the anger of her father's sister. If a son, whose parents are dead, neglects to provide his sister with the customary gifts of food when she returns to her husband after a visit to her 'father', he may become impotent: 'Those below are angry and when he has begotten twins he will have trouble at the ritual.' Or the girl may fall ill. 'She thinks: "Who is my father? This is my father, but he does not care for me." ' The mystical power of a senior relative is linked directly with his obligation to give gifts:

> My father's elder half-brother has power over me only if he has given marriage-cattle for my father or nurtured him. If he has given him cattle to marry a wife then he has power over him. . . . My superior (*mbala gwangu*) is he who gives me everything.

Favouritism in a polygynous family, shown in the unfair division of milk or meat or fish by the husband between his wives, is thought to anger the shades, which cause his cows to bleed from the udder when milked, or prevent fish entering his traps, and so do the bad temper and insulting language of a quarrelsome wife. Mwakwelebeja explained that:

> If a woman is bad-tempered when she is making beer the beer goes sour. If my wife and I quarrel my shades are angry and the beer is spoiled. I say to my wife: 'You have spoiled the beer because you do not listen to what I say.'

Neglect of his wards by the heir is a wrong-doing frequently mentioned.

> It is said that if I neglect my brother's children he and my father will be very angry, they will not come to meet me when I die, as the

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of hints and tokens of the goodwill or illwill of the unseen powers, and the wise man is he who profits by them where that is possible; where it is not possible, he is the wise man who quietly awaits the event, thankful that at least the misfortune does not take him at unawares, and that, if he cannot ward off the danger, he can meet it with an equanimity impossible to one upon whom the blow falls suddenly. 787

1. Weather lore is strangely absent, perhaps because in the tropics there is a regularity about the weather which renders prognostication as unnecessary as barometers. If, on a rainy evening, the crow caws on a high note, it will be hot the next day, with a cloudless sky; if on a low note the rain will continue. Another token of rain is given when the long-necked, long-legged birds, *mwankusye*, fly in a line abreast towards the lake. 787 821

2. Of bad news there are countless indications; of good news only a very few hints have come to light. Twitching of the upper eyelid indicates good fortune of some kind undefined; but if the twitching is in the lower lid, death is near, of the person whose eye twitches, or of a friend. 787 827

3. Before the settlement of the country by the Europeans, long journeys were rarely undertaken, and omens on the way were carefully watched for, and as carefully heeded when they were given. Serpents are the most trusted mediums and great significance is attached to their movements. A serpent lying on one side of the path, and slipping into the bush on that side as the travellers approach, indicates a clear 787 825

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787 825 path. But if the serpent crosses to the other side and into the bush, the way is closed, and the travellers will return to their homes, no matter how near their destination they may be. What will happen if they continue their journey is not clear; some undefined evil will overtake them. Parties on the war-path heeded this warning, for it was an omen of defeat if they went on, which, naturally, they never did. If [763] the snake escapes into a hole, it indicates a death at the nearest village; and if a python is seen on the road, the travellers, whose path is not closed, may expect to find the death-wail going on at the first village they come to.

A two-headed snake, whatever that may be, is a [763] sure sign of death at the place one is going to; and two snakes fighting indicate coming evil, which can only be averted by returning to the place whence one has set out. A tree falling across a path, is another warning, which no man disregards; but the tree must fall within view of the person to whom the hint is given; trees that have fallen otherwise have no significance. But it is worth noting that natives travelling with white men pay no heed to any omens. They are protected by the power of the European, and any significance the omens may have is his affair.

787 825 4. Travellers have their tokens on the way: the people to whom they go have foretokens of their approach. If the fire "speaks," if it makes a burring noise in the flame; if the hens go about uttering low cries; if *amayogobera*, small black birds with white

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787 breasts, sit on a tree near the house; if *muunjala*,
[525] little black and white birds of another species, hop
about twittering; the approach of strangers is fore-
[574] told. Hospitality to strangers is a primary virtue
among the Konde, and food is prepared at once; but
[576] it is not cooked until they actually arrive. To offer
them food already cooked, is to offer a cold welcome,
and possibly to do an injury; for cold food must not
be eaten by chiefs, nor by hunters, nor by doctors, for
in all these cases the effect would be to destroy the
power of the medicines by virtue of which they are
assured of success in their various callings.

787 5. Omens having reference to food are numerous,
262 and a few examples must suffice. If a fly goes into
one's mouth, it is a sure sign that the person will
soon be eating flesh, a rare treat for the Konde, who
seldom eat flesh, unless there is an occasion for it: a
birth, a marriage, or a death. But the fly indicates
none of these; the flesh hinted at is a pure gift with
no kind of condition attached. The same good
fortune is suggested if a child eats cinders from the
fire-place. A leopard crying all night in the neigh-
bourhood is giving information that some one has
broken a food prohibition. New season's food has
been eaten before the chief has laid an offering of the
first-fruits of that particular food-stuff at the grave
of his ancestors, and the dwellers in the underworld
are angry at the insult offered them. The chief is
informed of the crying of the leopard, and the
diviner is called in to find the culprit.

787 There is a common grass called *dinika*, which in

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787 appearance is not unlike *maleni*, from which beer is made. If anyone eats this while there is abundance of proper food, it is an omen of famine to come. If the offender is a child, he is not beaten; but if he is grown up, he is mercilessly dealt with. It is not pretended that the beating averts the evil, nor has the man's action in eating the *ditika* anything to do with the coming famine, except to foretell it. If one asks, Why then is he beaten? the answer is simply that having foretold evil he deserves to be beaten. This unpalatableness of plain truth (if it is plain truth) is not unknown among other races than the Bantu.

787 224 825 6. Elephants while being hunted impart a great deal of varied information to the hunters. As elephant hunting by natives has long been prohibited, the omens afforded are no longer available, but that does not affect the belief in them. "The elephant does not lie" is an assured conviction in the minds of the hunters, and when an omen was given, the hunt was abandoned until the matter was investigated.

If, as the hunters approach, elephants are found leaping upon each other, a halt is called; both because in that condition they are specially dangerous, and because the omen is otherwise bad. There is sin among the hunters, and the whole party returns to the *fitemle*, the temporary quarters erected for the hunting period. There the case is gone into. Some one has wronged his neighbour in the manner suggested by the action of the elephants, and nothing can be done until it is put right. To go on with the hunt would be the extremest folly, and if no one

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confesses, the party returns to the village, and the diviner is called to discover the culprit. 787 224

If two elephants are found kneeling and facing each other, some one's wife has erred in his absence, and the hunt is stopped until justice is done. An elephant taking up dust with his trunk and offering it to another, shows that some one has offered snuff to another man's wife, a most significant action, demanding immediate satisfaction. If an elephant is seen touching the teats of another, a similar action has been committed in the village, and again the hunt stops for inquiry and punishment. Trumpeting elephants are a sign of quarrelling in the village, and one plastering its face with mud is a sign of death, for the women at the death-wail cover their faces with mud or chalk. The hunters return, and do not resume until all is clear again. It is most important that not only the hunters should be free from evil, but their friends also, for evil brings them into danger, and it is the duty of all in the village to see that the natural dangers of the hunt are not increased by unnatural evil in their homes. 825

7. War was foretold by the prophets, but confirmatory signs were usually not wanting. If the horns of the new moon were of unequal length, an enemy was known to be approaching; necessarily an enemy from a distance, for the phenomenon must have been visible over a wide area. The same terror was announced by a cow bellowing at night, if there was no known cause for its outcry. This, naturally, is a thing of the past, as war, at least native war, has 787 721

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787 ceased. What significance would now be attached to
721 these omens, I do not know. The buffalo, like the
[825] elephant, does not lie, and wise men heed its warnings. Many years ago a man called Masapa went to the Kinga region, where he quarrelled with the people, and barely escaped with his life. His chief, Mwaisumo, took up the quarrel, and prepared to invade the enemy's territory, undeterred by the predictions of defeat which came in dreams to his prophets, until, on the way, one of his men was killed by a buffalo, and this was a warning not to be disregarded. On their return home, they were received by their women folks, not with contempt and mocking, but as wise men, who were too wary to tempt "Providence" by foolish action. One more war omen. If a man, on the point of leaving for the field of battle, was suddenly, but accidentally, seized by the wrist by his wife, he laid down his weapons, and quietly stayed at home; not for him the joy of battle; he would have been killed, and no one thought the worse of him for heeding the omen.

781 8. Foretokens of death are so numerous that it is
763 difficult even to classify them. Whatever is rare, or unnatural, or sudden, may be taken as a warning of approaching death. A mole seen by day, is a rare event, and full of dread. A Christian living near me saw this wonder in February, 1923, and in the same month he got news of the death of a friend a hundred miles away! No connection? He thought there was. To see the *kawebi*, a small aquatic animal, is to see something so rare that its appearance must be the

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789 patient, they would almost certainly kill him, for it is very probable that a patient who believed that he had taken one of these by mistake or otherwise, would die of sheer fright.

825 The *inyifwira* is a fiery flying-serpent, which lives 2-78 in pools, and turns the waters red; climbs trees, which thereupon break out into flame, but are not consumed; chases its prey for five miles, and lucky is he whose heels are light enough to escape; and finally, when dead, its body is made into the most powerful drug in the Konde Pharmacopœia. It gives authority to chiefs, and skill to doctors and diviners, and the common man who obtains possession of a tiny quantity is assured of success and riches. To tell the ordinary heathen Konde that all this is fable, is like telling very good and not necessarily unintelligent persons of a few generations ago, that there was no devil, with horns and hoofs and a tail!

Only the biggest doctors undertake to kill this monster when a fresh supply is called for. And even they, before beginning, protect themselves and their assistants with a great variety of other drugs, not so dangerous to obtain. The creature having been located in some pool or other, a small hut is built at a great distance, into which in the past a slave was put, to-day a sheep or a goat. The hut is now clayed over, and closed on all sides, the clay being thickly planted with sharp knives, and the whole sprinkled plentifully with a powdered food, of which the snake is very fond. All being ready, a swift runner is sent to the pool, a bell in his hand, the ringing of which attracts the

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snake. It emerges from the pool, with a *hu hu* sound, and the runner flies for his life towards the hut, pursued by the snake. Attracted by the sprinkled food, it climbs all over the hut, and is cut to pieces on the knives. After a little, and usually at night, the doctor in charge goes out to reconnoitre, and, finding the dead body, sends to tell all the surrounding chiefs and big doctors; who come, protected by a powerful prophylactic, for even the dead *inyifwira* can kill the unprotected. Each chief gets a portion of the flesh, a large share going to Chungu, who in turn distributes it to his leading subordinates and doctors. The blood is collected and sold, a small portion for a cow, to smaller men, who have no natural right to it.

The dread in which this medicine (*ifingira* it is now called) is held by the common people, is extraordinary. At Karonga in 1923 a man was accused of attempting to poison another. On his person was found a small packet done up in bark-cloth, which no native in the court would touch; and when the magistrate took it into his hands and proceeded to open it, the court was cleared in an instant. Whether it was the medicine made from the *inyifwira* snake, I do not know; but it undoubtedly belonged to that class of medicines.

Illnesses may be due to natural causes, which the native calls God. They yield to treatment without any ceremony. The prayer already quoted indicates the Konde attitude to such diseases. Secondly, illness may be due to witchcraft, and then there is no hope of cure until the sorcerer has been outwitted by

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went from Mwemusi's country down the path by Mwakalukwa's to Mwakaleli. He lived a year at Lumbila and found it too cold, and thence he went to Masoko, and thence to Lubaga. All men feared him and his animals.

In another version Lwembe's survival is linked with the possession of *ifingila*, the medicine on which still, today, the authority of chiefs is thought largely to depend.

Nkekete had much food and Mwemusi killed him because he had no *ifingila*. He killed him and he rose again. 'Why don't you die?' Mwemusi asked. Nkekete replied: 'I don't know, I have nothing, I am quite alone, I have no *ifingila*.' Mwemusi killed him again and he rose, many times. Then at last Nkekete said, 'I am tired.' And he showed Mwemusi and his men a razor (*ulwembe*) and said 'Kill me by cutting my throat with this', and they did and he stayed dead.

Mwemusi feared to kill Lwembe because he was very 'heavy'. He had *ifingila*, and when they tried to kill him they found his house full of animals, lions and others. . . . Once he turned himself into a stone when they tried to capture him. So Mwemusi told him to go far off, and he went with his two wives and two men, Kissoule and Kimonile. He went off riding on a lion like a donkey, with a lion behind his wives, and men were astonished when they saw him.

It is perhaps significant that Lwembe who survived is 'The Razor', by which Nkekete was killed, and the python from which *ifingila* medicine is made must be killed with razors and in no other way (*vide infra*, p. 60).

It is Lwembe's capacity to make things live and grow which is always emphasized:

Lwembe and another were given millet in their hands; Lwembe's sprouted, but not that of his fellow. He was told, 'You plant here and the other there.' The next day Lwembe's had sprouted, but not that of the other. He and his friend went to a hill in dry weather and wanted water. He just struck the earth and water came out. . . . He created leopards and kept them, and he moulded cattle of clay, he moulded them and they became cows, and his friends did the same and they remained clay.

When the heroes were driven out there was a fearful famine in BuKinga, for they had taken the fertility of the country with them, which is why, the priests say, sacrifices to them were begun by the Kinga. The priests of Lubaga were explicit on the point:

Mbasi (Lwembe 15?) came from BuKinga, he took the road to

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and Tutsi who established conquest states to the north-west.[1] 173

Whatever the origin and adventures of the heroes they were 773
important in Nyakyusa and Ngonde history because their [174]
graves became centres of religious ritual which linked together
groups that were otherwise largely independent. The myths
about them are the charter for chieftainship. They are depicted
as benefactors who brought to uncivilized men not only the
institution of chieftainship itself, but fire, cattle, iron, seed, and a
creative power resident in their own bodies and those of their
anointed heirs. But the myths also justify the power of commoners [778]
who first occupied the country and who have witchcraft in their [754]
bellies:

The commoners whom Lwembe found here were extraordinary. They 539
were cultivators, but they had not yet got fire, they ate their food raw.
It was we chiefs, it was Lwembe, who brought fire and cattle—he came
and found the original occupants without cattle; hence the com-
moners say, 'We are the earth'. Commoners are different from us
physically, they are black; they are awe-inspiring, they are witches.
Before you Europeans came the chiefs like Mwaipopo (116) were not [177]
awe-inspiring, they feared the commoners very much; the commoners
hammered the chief with their fists—yes, by daylight. And if the chief [754]
cut a man's bananas that man took the chief's. If the commoners were [643]
angry with Mwaipopo they fetched Mwangomo (124 whose chiefdom
adjoins Mwaipopo's) at night by their witchcraft; he came in the night
with his people and seized the cattle, both those of the chief, Mwaipopo,
and those of the commoners. The next day the commoners said: 'It
is we, we are angry. Why do you not look after us? Why do you not
kill cattle for us?' Then Mwaipopo would kill two head of cattle and
all the men in the country ate. . . . Mwaipopo and his equals were not
awe-inspiring long ago, it is you Europeans who have created chief-
tainship and awe.

[1] cf. H. H. Curson and R. W. Thornton, 'A Contribution to the Study of African Native Cattle', *Onderstepoort Journal of Veterinary Science and Animal Industry*, vii, 2 October 1936 (Government Printer, Pretoria). An analysis of the distribution and migration of breeds in Africa. [113]

H. B. Thompson and R. Scott, *Uganda* (1935), pp. 195 ff.

Fülleborn, *op. cit.*, pl. 68: 69.

M. Merker, *Die Masai*, pp. 157 ff., 1904, Berlin.

H. H. Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate*, 1904, pp. 86, 105 (early photographs of Nyoro cattle).

The short-horn type predominates among the Nyakyusa, but some animals suggest an intermixture with Sanga cattle. The hump is regarded as a great delicacy and is exaggerated in the clay cattle which boys model. Cf. Fülleborn, *op. cit.*, pl. 72. The similarity between the ritual and symbolism of the Nyakyusa and those of the Ganda as described by Roscoe is marked. J. Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 1911. [231] [825] [532]

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immured in the royal enclosure—a great stockade—and jealously guarded, for any infidelity on their part was thought to make their husband ill, and with him the whole country.

When the Kyungu did fall ill he was smothered by the nobles who lived around him at Mbande, and buried in great secrecy, with a score or more of living persons—slaves—in the grave beneath him, and one or two wives and the sons of commoners above. And in the midst of all this slaughter the nobles brought a sheep to look into the grave that the dead Kyungu might be gentle (*mololo*) like the sheep!

The living Kyungu was thought to create food and rain, and his breath and the growing parts of his body—his hair and nails and the constantly replaced mucus of his nose—were believed to be magically connected with the fertility of the Ngonde plain. When he was killed his nostrils were stopped so that he was buried 'with the breath in his body'; while portions of his hair and nails and of his nasal mucus were taken from him beforehand and buried by the nobles of Ngonde in the black mud near the river. This was 'to defend the country against hunger', 'to close up the land, to keep it rich and heavy and fertile as it was when he himself lived in it'.

His death was kept secret—a relatively easy matter since he lived in seclusion—and one of the nobles (*Ngosi*) impersonated him wearing his clothes. After a month or two when the nobles had decided whom to choose as the new Kyungu, the luckless man was summoned to Mbande: 'Your father calls you.' 'Then he came with his companions and entered the house to make obeisance; they seized him and put the sacred cloth on him and set him on the stool "Kisumbi", saying, "Thou Kyungu, thou art he", and he became the Kyungu. Then they struck the drum, Mwenekelwa, and everyone knew that the Kyungu had died and another had been installed.' Men feared greatly to be seized as the Kyungu, just as they feared to be seized as the Lwembe, because the life of a divine king was short. Ngonde historians quote a number of cases of sons of the Kyungu who fled to escape being set on the stool; once they had sat on it they dared not flee lest they die.

Though[1] the early Kyungus had lived on the stony top of Mbande none of them had been buried there, for 'the ground was

[1] The following section is quoted, with additions and amendments, from Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde*, pp. 29 ff.

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replied: 'Why does he deny it? He told me once: "I have a thing which kills people!"' Then, turning to the man: 'Go and fetch it out into the light.' Mandala went and we heard that he brought out another medicine, not the one asked for, he brought it to the headmen and Mwaipopo. Mwaipopo (who, being a chief, knew *inyifwila*) rejected the one Mandala brought saying: 'This is not it.' Then Mandala brought out another and again the chief rejected it saying: 'This is not the one we want.' Then he brought out a little bag made of bark-cloth. They sought a doctor to clear it out. All this happened in secret; we heard of it but did not see it. But in Court Mwaipopo turned Mandala out of his country 'because he had admitted that he was wicked', and Mwaipopo reminded the other chiefs in Court of a previous case of a man in Mwangomo's country who had used this medicine.

Inyifwila is made out of a python 'as thick as a man's thigh' which has been killed by crawling over razors. In Ngonde we were told:

> A certain snake they call *ngone* is killed in the hills to the west. They build a hut, closed, with a man inside ringing a cow bell and razors all over the roof. The snake comes and crawls over the roof, trying to get in and so dies. Then the doctors come to 'close it up'. When they have done so they cut it up for medicine—*inyifwila*; some is brought to Kyungu direct . . . some is taken to the doctors, and it is the doctors who give it to the chief.

A similar story was told in BuNyakyusa but they got their *inyifwila* from the Sangu and Hehe, to the north and east, not from the west, and in their account the trap was baited with a goat, not a man, and it was the blood of the python (*isota*) shed on the surrounding grass and on the trap itself which was used for medicine. To test the medicine the doctors gave a little to a chicken; if the chicken died the medicine was satisfactory; and the remains of the chicken were burnt and the ashes used as tested *inyifwila*.

'That snake is awful (*nisya fijo*), no one approaches to kill it. No! If it were speared everyone would die.' And because the python which is so terrible is thought to be linked with the rainbow it, too, is disliked. 'We fear the rainbow very much, we say it appears when a python looks up to the sky; if we are near a river we run from it for pythons live near rivers. . . . No, we are not mistaken, it is so.' The essential quality of the python is *ubusisya* (fearfulness, majesty, dignity) and this is what is required

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and cup is because this food is sacrified to their fathers-in-law. Those who are not sons of Ngomale do not drink the sacrificial beer or eat the meat either, because they are of other lineages. A *black* cow is used in the grove because groves are always fearful and darkness falls if something improper is done. So it is said that the blackness of the cow matches the fearfulness (*ubusiya*) of the grove.

Besides the sacrifices at Kabale and to their more immediate ancestors, Kukwe chiefs sent offerings to the BaNgumba, earlier occupants of the country. Mwamunda explained:

My grandfather prayed in the grove which is across the river on mission land, in the forest; it was the grove of us BaNgumba; we were owners of the soil, the Kukwe chiefs found us here. If ever a chief sent my grandfather and his fellows to pray there they went with an unripe stem of bananas, and sweet milk, and unripe maize, and small sweet potatoes; then they prayed and came home again and the next day, when they went to look they found the stem of bananas had ripened, the maize had hardened, the milk was thick and the sweet potatoes large; everything which was unripe had ripened. Then they said Kyala [that is Kyala and the shades] had stood by us. . . . We spoke of Kyala even before the Europeans had come. . . .[1]

They say that very long ago we BaNgumba, we sons of Kasyapula, had not yet got fire, the chiefs brought it. It is this they commemorate in the 'coming out' ritual. We, the owners of the soil, were always here, the chiefs came and built, and when others came the firstcomers fled. They are like you Europeans who fight wars; we owners of the soil think only of hoeing.

(*e*) MODERN CHANGES

It is quite clear that, though sacrifices to the heroes and at the groves of chiefs were still made while we were among the Nyakyusa (and more frequently than our friends at first admitted), the cycle was attenuated. Not only had human sacrifice probably ceased but the chiefs were reluctant to part with cattle. . . . Kasitile (86) said one day:

Since you [Europeans] came into the country the rituals have disappeared. Mwaipopo (116) never thinks of the rituals now. . . . It is cold and there is hunger; I went to Mwaipopo and told him to tell his

[1] According to the records of the first missionaries, sacrifices on Rungwe were to *Mbamba* but the same passage refers to *Mbamba or Kiala* meaning God. It is not clear whether the two names were equated by Kukwe informants or by the missionary himself, who was in touch with missionaries elsewhere in the district. (*Journal de l'Unité des Frères*, 1894.) I am indebted to the Reverend Paul Fueter for drawing my attention to this valuable Journal.

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commoners, and they went together to the grove of Mwangalaba, the last Kyungu (elder brother of Peter), with a white hen and sacrificed it there, and prayed saying:

Mwangalaba go thou to Mwakasungula your father and let him go to Mwangonde, and he to Mwagemo and he to Kiposa and he to Mpeta and he to Mwendemange and he to Kyabala and he to Syola and he to the Kyungu who lived at Mano and he to Ngulube (9) and Lyambilo (12). May he stand by us, may we sleep, may the rats disappear and illness also, may we sleep. Then when we had finished the invocation [I quote Mulwa] we extinguished the fires in all our houses; in the houses of the chiefs, and of Kyungu's great wife Namwilan'ombe, and of us commoners, we threw water on the ashes, but each took some ash, and a firebrand to the crossroads at Kyimbwe where we collected them all and left them to rot; there we threw away the rats saying: 'Let them fly away to Ngulube (9), let them fly away with the wind, let us sleep.' Then we ran to the pasture land to make new fire with a drill. We all took fire there in the bush, each a firebrand and lighted new fires in our own houses and in the house of the Kyungu, that is of his great wife. We arranged it with our wife Namwilan'ombe, because Kyungu had said 'Work with your husbands there'.

'Throwing away the rats' consisted in enclosing a live rat in two winnowing baskets, opening them at Kyimbwe, and flourishing them first in one direction and then in another, releasing the rat in the process. This had been specifically ordered by Bungulu, the prophetess.

(*b*) THE GROUND HORNBILL

In the country of Porokoto (49 K) there was much illness and many deaths (some, at least, from typhoid) during the dry season of 1937, and when a ground hornbill—always a bird of ill-omen among the Nyakyusa—mysteriously attacked a chicken in Syokela village, everyone was horrified. Mwamunda, a village headman, explained what had happened:

The headman of Syokela came with two men to Bwilile (senior village headman of his side) and said: 'Tell the chief that a ground hornbill has eaten a fowl at our place. We ask what this means. And also we do not sleep, we are ill.' Then Bwilile told me and we went together to the chief who said: 'I have heard, let us discuss it.' So we gathered at Nsyani's and the headman of Syokela stood up and said: 'My fathers, and friends, and children, and you chiefs, we have come to ask: have you ever before heard of a ground hornbill eating a fowl? (With an air

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for an appropriate medicine, and his main function is organizing the observances. 791 793

(*d*) SYMBOLISM

In the field of medicine imagination runs riot, and associations are unpredictable. The ingredients of most medicines are professional secrets and unknown to the user who takes the concoction on trust from his doctor, and inquires no further. Therefore the study of medicine is not linked to the study of social relationships in the same manner as is the study of ritual, for the symbolism of medicines is individual and free, whereas the symbolism of ritual is common and obligatory. 278 789

Nevertheless, the imagination of doctors works within the general symbolic system, and such knowledge as we have indicates that many of the associations made are similar to those used in ritual. In medicine, as in the rituals of kinship, one type of banana stands for a male, another for a female, a banana sucker represents a kinsman, a sprouting shoot conception. Smithing and coition are felt to be alike, and the molten iron that trickles out of a forge is linked with menstrual blood. Hair stands for growth, and a bald pate a devastated field. A ring, or circumambulation, implies a protecting fence. Pythons, crocodiles, leopards, and lions stand for power and majesty, spears and thorns for attack; vomiting and emptiness for innocence, spitting for forgiveness. There is colour symbolism in medicines (though we know little of it save that the *ikipiki* which stands for the blood of the lineage is red, or reddish brown), and auditory symbolism, the rumble of thunder and the groaning of a bellows being identified. Men mime that which they wish to avoid, as well as that which they desire; like things are antagonistic as well as sympathetic. No doubt a laborious study of prescriptions would reveal further general principles of association, as well as the range of individual imagination, but such a task has yet to be undertaken. [831] [326] [825] [827] [822]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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thought to be embedded in the visibly growing parts of the body of a chief, and the horrifying practice of plucking out the hair and nails of a dying man is an assertion of the value of vitality, energy, force of personality in a leader.

The separate origin of chiefs and people, and the reciprocity between them, are constantly emphasized. Among many primitive peoples a myth of common origin is the charter for unity, and foreign lineages are linked by some fiction to the dominant line; but among the Nyakyusa it is the *reciprocity* between cultivators and cattle-owners, between 'owners of the soil' who ate their food raw and immigrants who brought with them cattle and fire, which is the basis of unity. The chiefs (like the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers or the Voortrekkers) speak of themselves as having brought civilization to a savage land, but they acknowledge the contribution of the previous 'owners of the soil' in a way in which the white Americans and South Africans do not. Characteristically, the dichotomy of chiefs and commoners is couched in terms of descent, but in fact this is a fiction, for the younger sons of chiefs join the ranks of the commoners, and the mother of a chief is often of commoner origin.

The complementary character of the economies of chiefs and commoners is matched, in belief, by a balance in mystical power. The divine kings have an innate creative power while the commoners have pythons in their bellies with which to destroy their enemies. It sounds like a myth of good and evil put about by the chiefs, but we never heard it expressed in that way even by Kasitile, who so feared and hated the commoner priests. The destructive power of the commoners can be used morally, to maintain the established order, as well as irresponsibly by witches. The constitution was a balance between chiefs and commoners, not a dictatorship. Chiefs maintain their position by feasting their men on beef, and this, the Nyakyusa think, prevents the witches from attacking; sated with meat their pythons 'lie quiet'.

Ultimate power is symbolized by the python, for though the chiefs—like English kings—are commonly associated with lions and leopards, the terror of the grove of Lubaga, and the source of the *ifingila* medicine upon which the potency of divine kings and chiefs depends is a python, like that which lies in the belly of a witch. The most fearful thing of the tropical forest (and the forests on the Livingstone escarpment and Rungwe mountain are but the remains of much greater ones) is a natural symbol for power.

14: Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

begin later and continue till noon or beyond. The energetic ones sometimes hoe again for an hour or two in the late afternoon. Different crops are planted at different seasons of the year so that there is always some hoeing to be done." (G. Wilson, Introduction, p. 260).

The putting of maize-grains as seed into the earth is the women's work, the sowing of millet *(malesi)* of both sexes. If you ask the men after they had come home from their work: *"Mukumbide ifivanya fya nongi?"*, "Whose fields did you hoe?", the answer often may be: *"Tukumbide ifivanya fya tata!"* We have hoed the fields of our father.

In former times, the Nyakyusa had a lot of ceremonies relating to the beginning of the hoeing season and of the beginning of the harvest-work. They are, however, nowadays nearly extinguished under the influence of European culture.

With respect to the beginning of the hoeing season, a very comprehensive ceremony had to be carried out by the chief in community whith the *unganga* (medicine man) for providing the fields with extraordinary *(-sisya)* power *(amaka): amaka amasisya*, in this case: fertility.

When the crop was ripe, it was (at first) forbidden *(mwiko)* to take anything from the crop before the chief had given the permission. First the oldest male villagers informed the chief that it may be now the just time to give the crop free for the people, saying: "The people is hungry, we will now give them to eat!" Then the chief ordered that 6 or 8 (maize') corn-cobs were brought to him, and he sent these corn-cobs by a messenger to the (holy) offering-grove where they must be put down. After that has been correctly executed, he gave the permission for reaping the new crop.

(NB. It was believed that those corn-cobs put into the offering-grove were eaten especially from the leopards. The powderes bones of the leopards were considered important ingredients of the consecration drink which the chief had to take at his initiation ceremonies and which should give him the strength *(amaka)* of a leopard, so that he also was called "the leopard" or "the leopard chief".)

4. *Herding the Cattle and Cleansing the Stable.* The sociological importance of cattle among the Nyakyusa and the specific practice among them of herding the cattle by herdboys, that is also of highly sociological importance for the structure of the Nyakyusa society, is already described by G. Wilson (Introduction, p. 269 f).

The cleansing of the stables of which the Nyakyusa possess a great number of very well built ones, which have also sometimes a considerable length — apart from the cattle kraals —, is the task of